

(Washington, DC)— Today Congresswoman Gwen Moore joined Congressman Donald Payne (D-NJ) and Wisconsin business owner D. Edward Bolton in calling on the Small Business Administration to enforce federal regulations that guarantee a good faith effort is put forth by governmental agencies to ensure minority-owned businesses have a fair chance at contracts and subcontracts on government projects.

“With two decades of political organizing and activism under my belt, it is clear to me that one of the next frontiers in the fight for civil rights is economic,” said Congresswoman Gwen Moore. “America is a capitalist society, and until minority businesses have the same access to federal contracts and subcontracts as other businesses, there is little hope for economic equality.”

Major news outlets such as the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* and the *Washington Post* have both recently reported on the rise of African American-owned businesses in Milwaukee and across the nation. Between 1997 and 2002, the number of African American-owned businesses rose by 32 percent in Milwaukee and 38 percent in Wisconsin. Nationally, the number of African American-owned businesses increased by 45 percent.

With more minority-owned businesses available for contract work, the government’s efforts to hire Minority Business Enterprises (MBE) should be more successful than ever. Non-compliance with federal regulations costs MBEs millions of dollars in lost government contracts, and it deprives minority entrepreneurs of the opportunity to grow their business and create new job opportunities.

The Small Business Administration has demonstrated a lack of support for several programs geared toward minority- and women-owned businesses in recent years by failing to enforce, update, or fund them. For instance, a Women’s Contracting Program established by Congress in 2000 has yet to be implemented by the SBA six years later. Additionally, the SBA’s 8(a) program, the purpose of which is to foster the entrance of minority-owned businesses into the federal marketplace, has not received a legislative update in nearly two decades. In response to this specific issue, Congresswoman Moore joined Democratic members of the Small Business Committee last December in introducing the Minority Owned Venture Empowerment (MOVE) Act, a bill that would restructure and modernize the Small Business Administration’s (SBA) 8(a) program.

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